“Kitchen Cabinet” Quality Review Board Meeting
Meeting Minutes from February 7, 2001

Participants: Cindy Cameron – SFA Aid Awareness
Melissa Cantrell – NCS Pearson
Carolyn Dickens – SFA Acquisitions and Contract Performance
Paula Leonard – NCS Pearson
Bill Ryan – SFA Aid Awareness
Cheryl Tisdale – SFA Aid Awareness
Tony Williams - SFA Acquisitions and Contract Performance
Bob Wilson – Interaction Associates

I. Process Mapping with Interaction Associates

- Bob Wilson led us through an exercise to determine the following for the Editorial Services Contract (ESC) contract transformation:
    - Major processes
    - Milestones
    - Schedule
- We determined there are two major processes: the first has to do with the contract process itself - write a new work statement and deliver the business and technical proposals. The second is to handle the formation of the Quality Review Board (QRB) and related processes. The QRB piece is a critical component to the work statement because the measurements we agree upon will be included in the new work statement.
- **Action Items**: Bob Wilson will develop a process road map so all team members have a visual representation of key stakeholders and the schedule. (Added to Issues Log)

II. Feedback from First QRB Meeting on February 1

Bill: -We didn’t get through as many letters as he thought we would
-We have some work to do on the standard paragraphs (Added to Issues Log)
-The one-hour QRB meetings can’t be the only thing we do to assess mail; we need a separate review process as well. (Added to Issues Log)

Cindy: -So many people involved in the meeting – lots of input
-SFA and NCS Pearson each need to review the mail and provide feedback and comments during QRB meeting

Paula: -We need to address how we’re going to handle “positional” issues

All: -We need to define “assignments” prior to the QRB meetings so everyone is prepared ahead of time. Assignments could be something like reviewing the inquiry and response and making notes. (Added to Issues Log)

All: -We need to establish a process for SFA/NCS Pearson writer-writer reviews in addition to the QRB reviews. The thought here is for SFA and NCS Pearson “teams” of reviewers to review a number of inquiries and responses during the week, then provide reports to the QRB during the QRB meetings. We would also select a handful of inquiries/responses for the larger group to review. Essentially, we would have writer-writer mail and then QRB mail to review. (Added to Issues Log)

All: -We need to reschedule the QRB meetings for Wednesdays from 1:00-2:00 central time to accommodate work schedules. (Added to Issues Log)

All: -We need to have a person facilitate the QRB meetings so everyone has a say, we document our decisions, and so we can be more organized/efficient with the time allotted. (Added to Issues Log)

All: -We need to take meeting notes and distribute them after each QRB meeting. We decided to rotate this responsibility. (Added to Issues Log)

All: -We need to develop a checklist and process for the SFA/NCS Pearson writer-writer teams to report out during QRB meetings. (Added to Issues Log)

All: -We need to establish criteria for evaluating responses. Several criteria were discussed, eg the “pass/fail” approach or the “-1, 0, +1” approach. We decided that we’d like to review several scenarios and then decide upon one approach. (Added to Issues Log)

All: -We need to develop a process for communicating outcomes so we can measure and track improvement. (Added to Issues Log)

All: -We are going to concentrate on control mail issues for now because the volume is smaller and we can get our arms around it. After we establish the processes, we’ll address non-control issues.

III. Definitions and Measurements

A. “Complete” Response:

- The opening paragraph of the response summarizes our understanding of the issues expressed in the incoming inquiry. (This represents a change from current process of summarizing concerns in casework responses only.) The intent of summarizing the concerns is to let the reader know that SFA has carefully read the inquiry. It also gives the inquirer an expectation of the issues we will address.

- The response provides all of the information needed (versus *requested*) eg, address of a state agency, web site URLs, etc. The thought here is to address the next question the inquirer would have. For example, in a telephone conversation, if an operator told a student something, the student may ask another question to clarify the response or that gives them information on next steps. Similarly, writers should anticipate the “what next” kind of information the reader may have.

- Casework is done when such information would help the inquirer. In other words, instead of giving a general paragraph that says “students in this situation may do such and such,” we should do the casework and respond with something like, “we contacted this agency and here’s what *you* (the student) need to do.” The general thought is that we should customize a response whenever appropriate.

B. “Accurate” Response:

- No errors of fact

- No more than ___ “surface errors” per ___ pages.

- No gross grammatical errors - few “picky” grammatical errors. The discussion for this item concerned the definition of a gross grammatical error. We kind of agreed that if the grammatical error was obvious, then it’s an error. However, if we had more than ___ minutes worth of discussion about whether something was an error or not, than it wouldn’t be counted because it’s a picky grammatical error.

C. “Relevant” Response

- The response contains all needed fact sheets, brochures, and other enclosures as indicated in the body of the response.

- The response does NOT contain extraneous paragraphs or information. The discussion on this item was about including paragraphs that didn’t pertain to the student’s situation.

- We discussed the possibility of not including text in the body of the response if we can refer the inquirer to an appropriate page or passage from an enclosed publication or a fact sheet. Including standard paragraphs in the response that can be found in an enclosure seemed redundant. We didn’t make any decisions, but thought it would be a way to reduce the amount of text in certain responses.

D. “Promptness”

There was a great deal of discussion about timeliness and how to measure it. Our preliminary thoughts are as follows:

- Control mail – Meet the ED due date. This means NCS Pearson would need to deliver completed responses to SFA at least one day prior to the due date on the tracking sheet.

  We talked about whether the QRB would review control mail prior to sending out the response or afterwards. We’d like to, but for now we’ll continue to review mail prior to sending out the response. This means that the requirement above (deliver at least one day prior to the ED due date) wouldn’t work, because QRB meetings are once a week. However, implementing the writer-writer reviews would take care of this issue.

- Non-Control Mail – Casework responses – move these to control mail deliverables and rename the control mail deliverables as something else. The objective here is to have a “Level 1” type of mail that requires an additional level of effort. “Level 2” mail would be for responses not requiring casework, eg, form and custom responses. We agreed to look into this. (Added to Issues Log)

- For casework mail and congressional mail (Level 1), the requirement is to meet the ED due date, or, if no ED due date because of no tracking sheet, then within 10 working days after receipt.

- Form letters, custom responses, publication requests (Level 2) – within 3 working days after receipt (Example: Received on Monday, due out on Thursday)

- E-mail – We didn’t get to this item (Added to Issues Log)

- We discussed how to measure turnaround time and the fact that our image system can report on turnaround time for a given period of time (month), then provides us with a percentage of the responses completed within that turnaround time eg 95%.

IV. Next Steps

We agreed that we needed to keep moving forward. We also agreed that based on this meeting we needed some time to work on action items for our next meeting. We agreed to meet on Monday, February 26 to continue our discussions.

Action Item: Melissa will develop and distribute the meeting minutes from this meeting and will also develop and distribute a draft agenda for the February 26 meeting.